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AUTHOR Tautfest, Patricia B.; Young, F. Chandler
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ABSTRACT

A survey was conducted to determine student-parent attitudes toward non-academic University regulations and entering students' preparation for self-regulation. Questionnaires were completed by currently enrolled undergraduate students, their parents, and parents of freshmen planning to enroll at the University in the fall of 1969. Current student attitudes toward regulations, parental expectations for regulations and the level of preparation for self-direction and responsibility of prospective students were determined. Differences in response existed between parents and students in regard to freshmen housing, hours and visitation privileges. The findings indicate a need for flexibility in responding to the variation in the maturity levels of students. A variety of housing, more effective programs for the inexperienced student and orienting parents toward a more realistic picture of student life are suggestions to combat current student and parental problems uncovered by the survey. (Author/MC)

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STUDENT-PARENT ATTITUDES TOWARD CERTAIN REGULATIONS

and the

ENTERING STUDENTS' PREPARATION FOR SELF-REGULATION

PATRICIA B. TAUTFEST

and

F. CHANDLER YOUNG

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Student-Parent Attitudes Toward Certain Regulations and the Entering Students' Preparation for Self-Regulation

Students in today's large university are coming from increasingly diverse backgrounds with more disparate levels of preparation for self-responsibility. This alone, makes it difficult to establish regulations which neither stifle the development of some students nor place overwhelming demands on others.

To complicate this matter, the relationship between the student and the university has recently been subject to question and revision.* Recently, however, students have challenged the university's right to impose regulations which they claim abridge their Constitutional rights. Many students oppose any restraints on behavior beyond those enacted by federal, state or local statutes. On the other hand, there are parents and other interested publics who continue to hold the more traditional expectations toward the university's responsibility to exercise certain restraints on the students' lives.

Any efforts to resolve these competing values and establish appropriate regulations require information relevant to some basic questions. How much prior preparation have students received in exercising self-responsibility? How much disparity is there between parental expectations for university regulation of their sons and daughters and the university's actual policies? What disparity exists between parental expectations for university rules and the abridged ability of a university to impose them?

To obtain information relevant to these questions, the Divison of Student Affairs of the Madison Campus of the University of Wisconsin initiated a survey in the spring of 1969. Presented herewith are data from this study pertaining to the area of student housing regulations.

PROCEDURE

The Wisconsin Survey Research Laboratory was engaged to conduct the survey and tabulate the findings. The Survey Research Laboratory also assisted in the development of the questionnaires devised by the Division of Student Affairs. The authors of the questionnaire are indebted to Edward S. Borgin and Morton H. Shaevitz of the University of Michigan for the ideas gained from their January, 1969, report, "The Entering Student's Preparation for Self-Regulation".

Questionnaires were mailed to a sample of each of three groups: currently enrolled undergraduate students, the parents of these currently enrolled students, and the parents of young men and women planning to enroll as freshmen at the University in the fall of 1969. The questionnaires sent to all three groups contained items in the following areas of University regulations:

*Historically, students accepted behavior codes as a part of the contract that was implicit in becoming a university student.

1) where students should live as freshmen,
2) what time, if any, freshmen should be in while living in University-supervised housing, and;
3) what choices, if any, should there be for freshmen with respect to entertaining friends of the opposite sex in student rooms in University-supervised living units.

The questionnaires sent to the parents of prospective freshmen contained additional items regarding the degrees of freedom granted their offspring during the senior year in high school. The areas of self-responsibility and decision making included educational plans (if, when, and where to go to college), social practices (choice of friends and whom to date), study habits (where and when to study), hours kept (weeknight and weekend times due in), and visitation (entertaining friends of the opposite sex without an adult present).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Sample and Responses (Table I)

Return rates of 62%, 54%, and 64% were obtained from current students, current parents, and the parents of 1969 freshmen respectively. When the percentages of responses are compared with enrollment statistics for sex and state of residence, they are quite similar. These data tend to indicate that the samples are representative of the populations from which they were drawn.

Where Freshmen Should Live (Table II)

While the student responses to this question indicate that a majority favor no regulations, a sizeable minority apparently feels that some form of University-supervised housing is beneficial during the freshman year.

Parents indicated quite strongly that they favor some form of University-supervised housing for freshmen, both for their daughters and their sons. This is true for parents whose offspring had completed from one to seven semesters at the University, as well as for parents looking forward to sending their son or daughter to Madison.

Consider the differences in responses between parents and students. Note the variation among freshmen in preparation for self-regulation and for decision making (see Figure I). Assume that the parents are probably best able to judge the maturity of their sons and daughters. In view of these considerations, it would seem desirable to make the choice of where to live a matter between student and parent. Such a policy would avoid placing overwhelming demands for self responsibility on those not prepared, while at the same time allow freedom of choice to those capable of greater self-direction. It would also afford those parents (16%), who oppose regulating where their son or daughter should live, a satisfactory alternative.

Hours for Freshmen (Tables III and IV)

The differences in opinions regarding hours rules between students and parents are pronounced. Most students prefer no rules. Most parents prefer some rules.

Further, the data indicate that there is little difference between the levels of freedom granted at home to sons and daughters. However, there is wide variation in home preparation with approximately 20% of the 1969 freshmen having little or no choice, while approximately 20% were given the experience of either free or virtually free choice.

In this area too, there appears to be substantial enough differences between parent and student responses and enough variation in the degrees of freedom granted at home to indicate a need for available choices. The determination of the choice should also be a matter between the parents and the student who possess the knowledge to make the choice.

Visitation (Table V)

An overwhelming percentage of student responses indicated that there should be no University regulations in this area, but rather decided by the students themselves. Student responses to this question may reflect more how they think things ought to be, rather than the desire to utilize this privilege.

Parent responses indicate that 64% of the current parents and 57% of the parents of 1969 freshmen found visitation acceptable. Approximately one-half of each parent group favoring visitation would leave the decision to the students. A substantial minority of all parent responses (36%) indicated that they were opposed to visitation for freshmen. Parents of 1969 freshman daughters report greater degrees of freedom at home than do the parents of males. While the differences may not be significant, they do tend to further confirm the demise of the double standard.

In view of certain unknowns, the differences between student and parent responses, the differences within parent groups, and the degree of preparation for this privilege, it seems desirable that alternatives be provided. As in the cases of where to live and hours kept, the choice here should be a matter between the student and his or her parents.

Levels of Freedom at Home (Figure I)

Parents reported granting virtually free choice to their sons and daughters in the making of educational plans, study habits, dating and choice of friends. On the other hand, they have retained a good deal of control over the hours kept by their offspring and the entertainment of friends of the opposite sex while the parents are away from home. While vestiges of a double standard remain (dating), the difference was miniscule. In the area of hours, the mean scores for men and women were equal. Parents of daughters accorded slightly more freedom in the areas of educational plans, study habits and visitation. It is possible that parents were not describing their actual treatment of their offspring, but rather how they felt they ought to have treated them. However, under conditions of anonymity, it seems reasonable to assume that the responses are accurate.

Two disparities are apparent when comparing parental expectations for the University's control of their sons and daughters. First, 49% of the parents of 1969 freshmen report that they have accorded their sons and daughters considerable free choice in the matter of hours. Yet 66% (with 10% not answering these items) would have the University impose a curfew.* Second, only 27% of the parents of 1969 freshmen report that their sons and daughters have had much (considerable to free choice) say with regard to entertaining members of the opposite sex while the parents are absent. However, 57% (30% student controlled and 27% with parental permission) accept a visitation policy at the University. Apparently these parents expect their sons and daughters to exercise greater self-responsibility in this area than they were accorded at home.

*Apparently these parents expect the University to be more restrictive than they have been, a somewhat difficult role to perform.

SUMMARY

Questionnaires were mailed to 805 students, 804 parents of enrolled students and 707 parents of fall 1969 freshmen to determine their attitudes toward a number of non-academic University regulations. In addition, the parents of the prospective freshmen were asked to indicate the degrees of freedom accorded their sons and daughters in a number of areas while they were living at home. Responses were received from 62% of the students, 54% of the parents of these enrolled students and 64% of the parents of prospective students.

The information was requested to determine:

1) current student attitudes toward regulations,
2) parental expectations for regulations, and;
3) the level of preparation for self-direction and responsibility of prospective students.

Given such information, means could be devised to avoid an environment which stifles the further development of the more mature student or which places overwhelming demands on the less mature student.

The findings of this survey indicate the need for flexibility in responding to the wide variation among the maturity levels of students. These responses should include:

1) presenting a variety of alternate types of student housing from which the prospective student and his parents may select the one appropriate to his level of experience and preparation,
2) developing more effective programs designed to aid the less experienced student in his quest for personal and intellectual growth,
3) orienting parents toward a more realistic picture of student life.

Table I. Student and parent sample sizes and responses according to sex and residency

	Students Enrolled Spring 1969		Parents of Enrolled Students		Parents of 1969 Freshmen	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Questionnaires mailed	805		804		707*	
Questionnaires returned	501	62	438	54	454	64
Respondents by sex						
Males	283	56	242	55	231	51
Females	218	44	196	45	223	49
Respondents by Residency						
Residents	360	72	288	67	363	80
Non-residents	141	28	150	33	91	20

*A sample of 749 was projected, but not realized (See preliminary report)

Table II. Where freshman students should live expressed in percentages

	Students Enrolled Spring 1969			Parents of Enrolled Students			Parents of 1969 Freshmen		
	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total
Preferences									
No University Regulations	68	61	65	18	14	16	17	14	16
Dormitory or Supervised	29	34	31	77	82	79	76	84	80
Miscellaneous or No Response	3	5	4	5	4	5	7	2	4
Total percentages	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Table III. Weeknight hours, if any, for freshman students expressed in percentages

	Students Enrolled Spring 1969			Parents of Current Students			Parents of 1969 Freshmen		
	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total
Preferences									
10:00 p.m. - midnight	7	14	10	67	75	71	40	56	48
Reasonable hours, not specified	7	14	10	7	2	5	20	22	21
No hours	86	72	80	16	16	16	26	14	20
No answer or miscellaneous	0	0	0	10	7	8	14	8	11
Total percentages	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

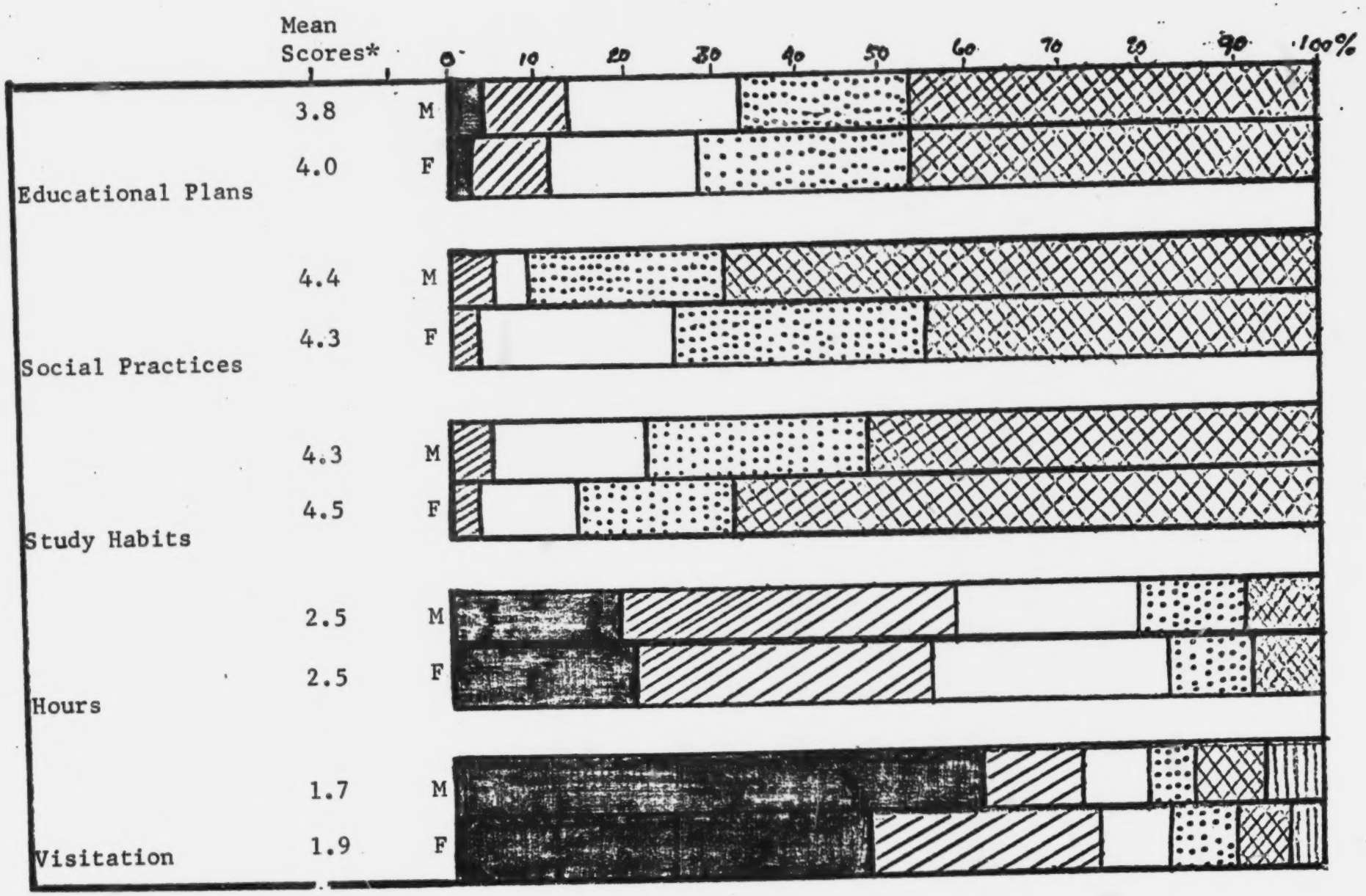
Table IV. Weekend hours, if any, for freshman students expressed in percentages

	Students Enrolled Spring 1969			Parents of Current Students			Parents of 1969 Freshmen		
	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total
Preferences									
Midnight - 2:00 a.m.	7	13	10	66	71	68	35	53	44
Reasonable hours, not specified	2	2	2	5	2	3	20	19	19
No hours	91	85	88	24	17	21	31	18	25
No answer or miscellaneous	0	0	0	5	10	8	14	10	12
Total percentages	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Table V. Visitation alternatives expressed in percentages

	Students Enrolled Spring 1969			Parents of Current Students			Parents of 1969 Freshmen		
	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total
Preferences									
Residents in each supervised unit make own rules	75	68	73	12	15	12	14	7	10
During specified hours upon 2/3 vote of residents	18	28	22	19	22	20	19	20	20
During specified hours with parental permission	7	3	5	33	27	32	26	28	27
Should not be provided for in supervised units	0	1	0	33	34	33	36	42	39
No response	0	0	0	3	2	3	5	3	4
Total percentages	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Figure I. Percentages of Males and Females Receiving Various Levels of Freedom at Home



*1 = No Choice
5 = Free Choice

LEGEND

- Parents Decided
- Some Choice
- Considerable Choice
- Almost Free Choice
- Free Choice
- Did Not Answer